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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PRAGUE 000564

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/17/2019

TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [EZ](#) [PL](#) [RS](#)

SUBJECT: CZECH GOVERNMENT DELEGATION REACTS CONSTRUCTIVELY  
TO U.S. DECISION ON MD, BUT NOTES CONCERNS

REF: 17 SEPTEMBER 2009 CARNIE/KARAGIANNIS ET AL. E-MAIL

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Mary Thompson-Jones, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In a September 17 meeting with Czech officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense, and Prime Minister's Office, a USG delegation headed by USD/P Flournoy briefed on President Obama's decision regarding missile defense (MD) in Europe. Overall the Czech officials reacted constructively to the U.S. decision but noted some concerns. The Czech delegation expressed particular concern that the absence of efforts to establish a Czech radar site would leave a void in bilateral security relations. The Czechs sought concrete details on how they could participate in the new architecture, especially command and control. They proposed several ideas for keeping bilateral relations strong, including a paper entitled "Beyond Missile Defense" (ref) laying out ideas for security cooperation. The U.S. delegation expressed willingness to consider the Czechs' ideas and find new avenues for strengthening bilateral relations. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Czech FM Kohout opened the meeting expressing gratitude for President Obama's call to FM Fischer informing him of his decision on missile defense (MD).

#### U.S. Delegation Explains Policy Review Conclusions

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¶3. (C) USD/P Flournoy said the administration had hoped to consult with the Czech government before making a decision. However, after recent media speculation about the decision, the President determined to reach a decision earlier in order to put an end to erroneous speculation. The MD policy review had come to two broad conclusions. First, the Iranian long-range missile threat to the U.S. has not advanced as substantially since 2006 as had been predicted. However, Iran had developed hundreds of short and medium-range missiles capable of reaching southern Europe. Second, new technology was available to answer the current threat, and that technology could eventually cover all of Europe. The U.S. was committed to defending Europe, Secretary Gates was convinced this new architecture would better answer the threat and be more cost-effective, and the President followed by Secretary Gates would announce the MD decision later in the day.

¶4. (C) USD/P told the Czech delegation that the Czech Republic remains one of our closest allies. She acknowledged the courage the Czech government had shown in supporting MD and the political capital the government had spent in that effort. The U.S. government hoped the Czechs would continue to be a partner in the new MD architecture, which still

offered a number of possibilities for Czech participation.

15. (C) USD/P explained that given the revised threat assessment and available new technology, the radar site in the Czech Republic was no longer necessary. However, the Czechs were still a partner on MD, including in NATO. The USG hoped that our bilateral defense relations would lead to broader and deeper cooperation.

16. (C) FM Kohout began by asking how the Czechs could participate in the new architecture. Both he and European Minister Fule noted that bilateral relations had recently been focused on the radar site, and there would now be a vacuum in relations that needed to be filled with new concrete initiatives. Kohout presented a list entitled "Beyond the Missile Defense Review" (ref) that he said the Czech government hoped would be implemented.

#### A Sensor Network Instead of Czech Radar Site

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17. (C) LTG O'Reilly emphasized that the new proposal actually enhanced MD in Europe and for the Czech Republic. Our assessment was that the current threat to Europe was from hundreds of Iranian short and medium range missiles that could reach southern Europe; the long range threat had not developed as quickly. The interceptors that could counter these would rely on a network comprising multiple sensors, including UAVs, satellites and forward-based radar. These multiple sources would provide better tracking, without the risks attending failure of a single tracking site. LTG

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O'Reilly told the Czech delegation that command and control of the new MD architecture could be one avenue for Czech participation.

18. (C) FM Kohout asked whether this was purely a threat-based reassessment, or whether Czech public opinion had played a role. U/S Tauscher replied that this was based solely on the threat assessment. Iranian long range missile development had not progressed as quickly as previously anticipated, short and medium range missiles were the current threat, and newer technology used different tracking. Moreover, Russian objections to MD played no role in the decision. This new system represented a huge commitment to the defense of Europe.

#### Bilateral Relations

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19. (C) U/S Tauscher stressed that strong bilateral relations would continue and the USG would seek to visibly demonstrate this. The U/S also stated that we would aim to hold a high-level defense group (HLDG) meeting before the end of the year.

110. (C) Minister for European Affairs (and ex-ambassador to NATO) Stefan Fule said the Czech government wanted to avoid a "switch on, switch off" effect in bilateral relations and that we needed to fill the radar void with a positive agenda. He asked for specific details on how the Czechs could participate in the new MD architecture, including in command and control. Noting that Russia would be a big issue, Fule also asked whether the USG had a strategy to counter the impression that the U.S. was forgetting Central and Eastern Europe in the interest of better relations with Russia. Fule said the Czechs would want to know more details about the future of the proposed system. He asked about Poland's future role in MD and expressed doubt that the new system, as described, would be cost effective.

111. (C) USD/P pointed to the 2008 U.S.-Czech Strategic Defense Cooperation Declaration as one possible roadmap for future bilateral cooperation. She stated that the USG was interested in understanding how it might assist the Czechs in

developing their defense capabilities. The U.S. was aware of Czech efforts to provide trainers and Mil7s, and we would seek to expand work with the Czechs in Afghanistan. Media reports that claimed MD was being scrapped were inaccurate; the system was being reinvigorated. The proposed new architecture also included the possibility of SM-3 sites in northern Europe, possibly in Poland.

¶12. (C) FM Kohout said the two sides needed to avoid negative impact on bilateral relations. He urged a clear public message that relations were not weakening, followed by concrete bilateral projects that would be highly visible and easily understood by the Czech public. For example, the U.S. could consider establishing an academy similar to West Point in the Czech Republic to train military officers from Central and Eastern Europe, or could agree to send a Czech scientist on a space shuttle trip to the International Space Station. Kohout suggested high-level bilateral visits, including a meeting between President Obama and PM Fischer in Washington.

¶13. (C) DFM Pojar said in perhaps the most dramatic moment in the meeting that "while I understand the conclusion" the policy review decision placed Czech Atlanticists in a "deep, difficult situation." Poland had received something "face-saving," but the Czechs had received nothing. Pojar said that during MD negotiations, the Czechs had acted "more responsibly" than the Poles. However, the Framework Agreement had not been put into effect; joint research projects were small and there were no further ones on the horizon; the HLDG was not a "sell" for the Czech public. He went on to stress that Czech Atlanticists would be "devastated." The decision would inevitably affect bilateral relations. Better bilateral relations needed something visible, robust, and serious. Minister Fule suggested the U.S. locate a joint NATO/Russia information center in Prague instead of Moscow or Brussels. "Why not in Prague?" he asked. "Be bold." Pojar suggested a facility "beyond the Rhine."

¶14. (C) LTG O'Reilly countered that the Framework Agreement was in effect, two joint projects were complete, and a third

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was ongoing. Pojar said such projects needed to be better funded and publicized and the USG needed to commit to continued research projects with the Czech Republic.

¶15. (C) U/S Tauscher replied that the U.S. was open to Czech suggestions. USD/P pointed out that Defense Minister Bartak's September 18 appointments with Secretary Gates and NSA Jones could be opportunities for public statements underscoring our joint continued commitment to strong bilateral relations and to U.S. commitment to Europe.

¶16. (C) U/S Tauscher asked how interested the Czechs were in future participation in MD discussions and architecture. Pojar said the Czechs did not want to be left out and wished to be considered "privileged partners." NSC Senior Director Sherwood-Randall urged the Czechs to help drive MD forward in NATO; Pojar affirmed that the Czechs wished to participate both bilaterally and within NATO. FM Kohout concluded the meeting by noting "we will pay a political price. Let's make it as small as possible."  
Thompson-Jones